# Reporters 'Had' the FBI

MAR 10 1975

# But Not Oswalds Number

By LONNIE HUDKINS
Staff Reporter

S-172.

That's the number some people believe was the payroll designation of Lee Harvey Oswald by either the FBI or the CIA. The number has been mentioned in many articles and books and in the Warren Commission Report.

The number was even offered as evidence or proof that Oswald was a government agent during a program broadcast by ABC Thursday night in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

One of the participants in the talk show, which included comedian Dick Gregory, said had spent 11 years "researching" the assassination and used good old S-172 as proof that Oswald was an agent.

Although it is embarrassing to divulge, S-172 never existed. I made it up.

Actually, there were three of us who made up the number. The others included Bill Alexander, who at the time of the assassination was an assistant district attorney in Dallas County, Texas, and Hugh Aynesworth.

Aynesworth was a reporter for The Dallas Morning News. He later became a bureau manager for Newsweek and is now a freelance writer.

We thought we had good reason to make up the number when we did it.

Alexander was one of the prosecution's top prosecutors when he was with District Atty. Henry Wade, and Aynesworth and I figured someone was tapping our respective office and home telephones in Dallas and Houston.

We decided that one way to find out was to hold a conference call, make up something outlandish and then keep our respective mouths shut while we waited to see what might happen.

After more than 11 years, it is hard to recall exact words although the words we used may very well be on tape in some archive or file. So I will recall or paraphrase the conversation to the best of my ability.

The phone rang on my desk at the Houston Post. Bill, Hugh and I exchanged greetings. There may have been a fourth person, another reporter, in on the call. But I can't remember for sure.

After the exchange of pleasantries, Bill asked me somethinglike "Lonnie, do you remember what Oswald's payroll number was?"

I answered "I think it was S-172."

Either Bill or Hugh then interjected "could it have been S-179?"

I remember insisting that the number was S-172. We all agreed on that number and ended the conversation.

Within 30 minutes, a redhaired man who showed me his FBI identification was sitting at my desk. He asked me if I had heard about any rumors that Oswald had a government payroll number. He then assured me that the number wasn't an FBI payroll number.

I told him I didn't know what he was talking about. He left. Similar scenes were taking place in the office of Alexander and Aynesworth.

A few weeks later, someone in the FBI headquarters in Washington obviously leaked the story to a nationally syndicated columnist.

The columnist quoted FBI sources as denying the report of the payroll number. In other words, they were issuing a denial to a story that had yet to be circulated or published by the people who fabricated it.

After the column appeared, I wrote a story which asked whether Oswald was indeed a stoll pigeon, for a federal agency — the FBI or CIA. I offered no proof. I just specualted and asked the question.

To this date, I have no personal knowledge that he was or wasn't a double agent. I have only my suspicions.

Nor do I blame the FBI for listening in on my conversations with some of the people involved in the complex and tragic saga of the assassination.

I only wish that the FBI had put the matter in its proper perspective. Long before the Warren Commission report was completed, I felt the FBI knew the true situation, that the number had been fabricated to determine what agency was tapping us.

To my consternation and subsequent embarrassment the FBI agents attributed my source for the number as a deputy sheriff who was a close friend. They apparently deduced that he had to be the source. They didn't want to tell their boss, J. Edgar Hoover, that the FBI had been had.